刺仇雕鸮

FEATHERED ASSASSINS

THE GOLDEN SPARROW

7

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Sun Ye

黑白漫文化

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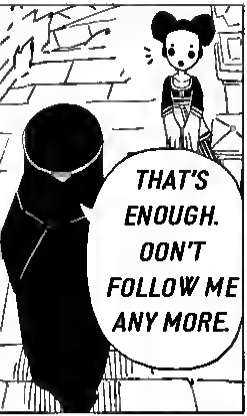

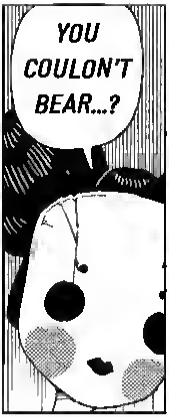

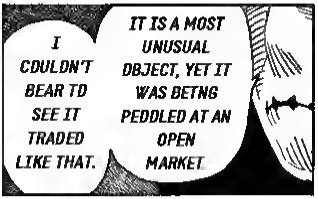

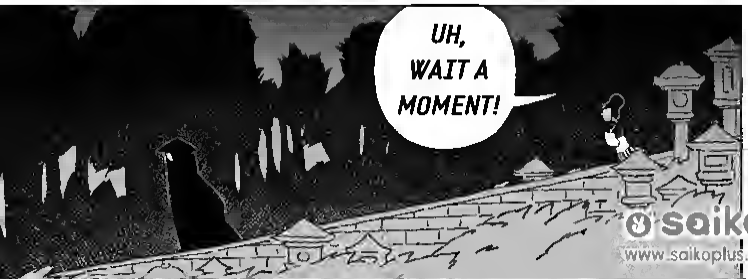

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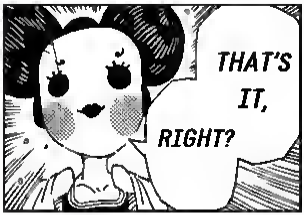
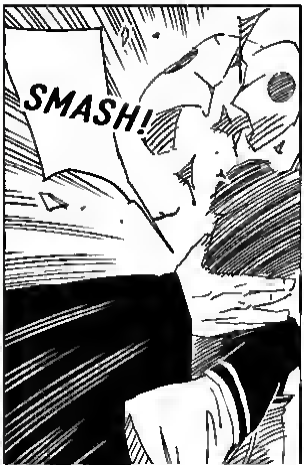
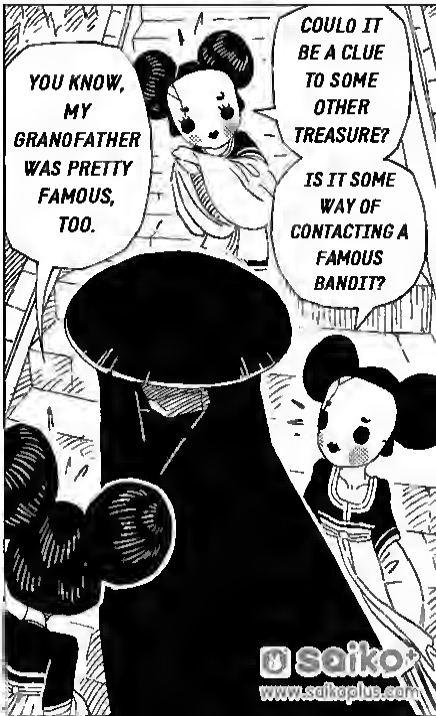
JUST WHAT'S SO UNUSUAL ABOUT IT?
YOU COULD FIND THEM ANYWHERE!
THAT MIRROR IS MADE OF NORMAL MATERIALS. THE CRAFTSMANSHIP IS SIMPLE AND CRUDE.






YOU KNOW, MY GRANDFATHER WAS PRETTY FAMOUS, TOO.
COULD IT BE A CLUE TO SOME OTHER TREASURE?
IS IT SOME WAY OF CONTACTING A FAMOUS BANDIT?

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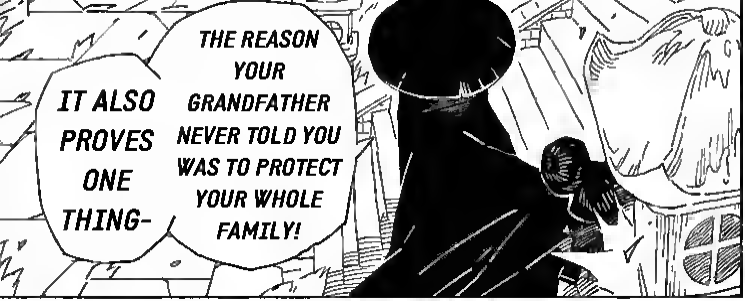

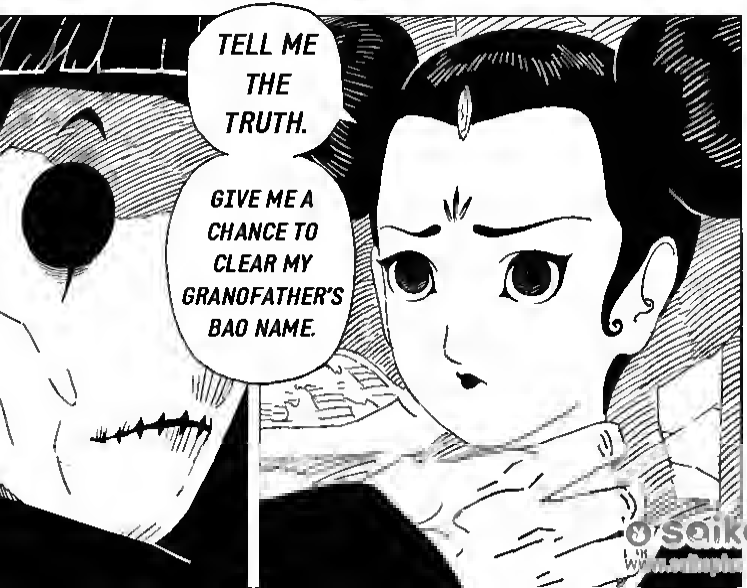

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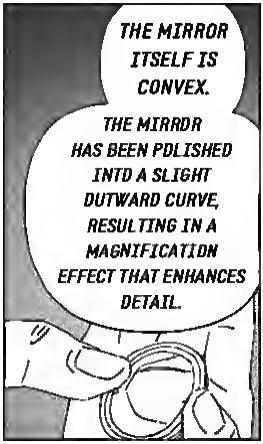
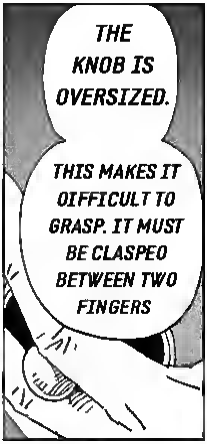
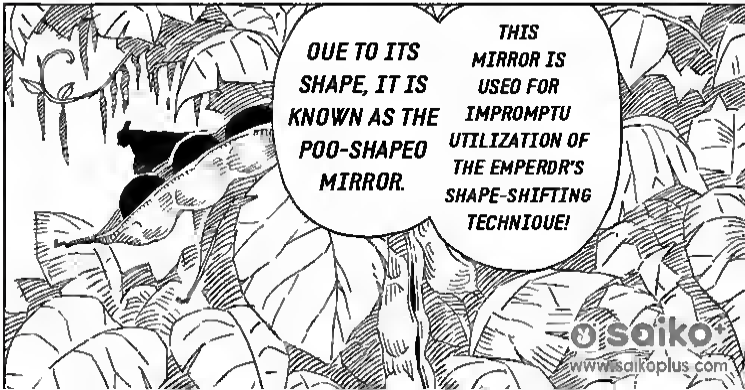

THE MIRROR ITSELF IS CONVEX.
THE MIRRDR HAS BEEN PDLISHED INTD A SLIGHT DUTWARD CURVE, RESULTING IN A MAGNIFICATIDN EFFECT THAT ENHANCES DETAIL.




OUE TO ITS SHAPE, IT IS KNOWN AS THE POO-SHAPEO MIRROR.
THIS MIRROR IS USEO FOR IMPROMPTU UTILIZATION OF THE EMPERDR'S SHAPE-SHIFTING TECHNIOUE!

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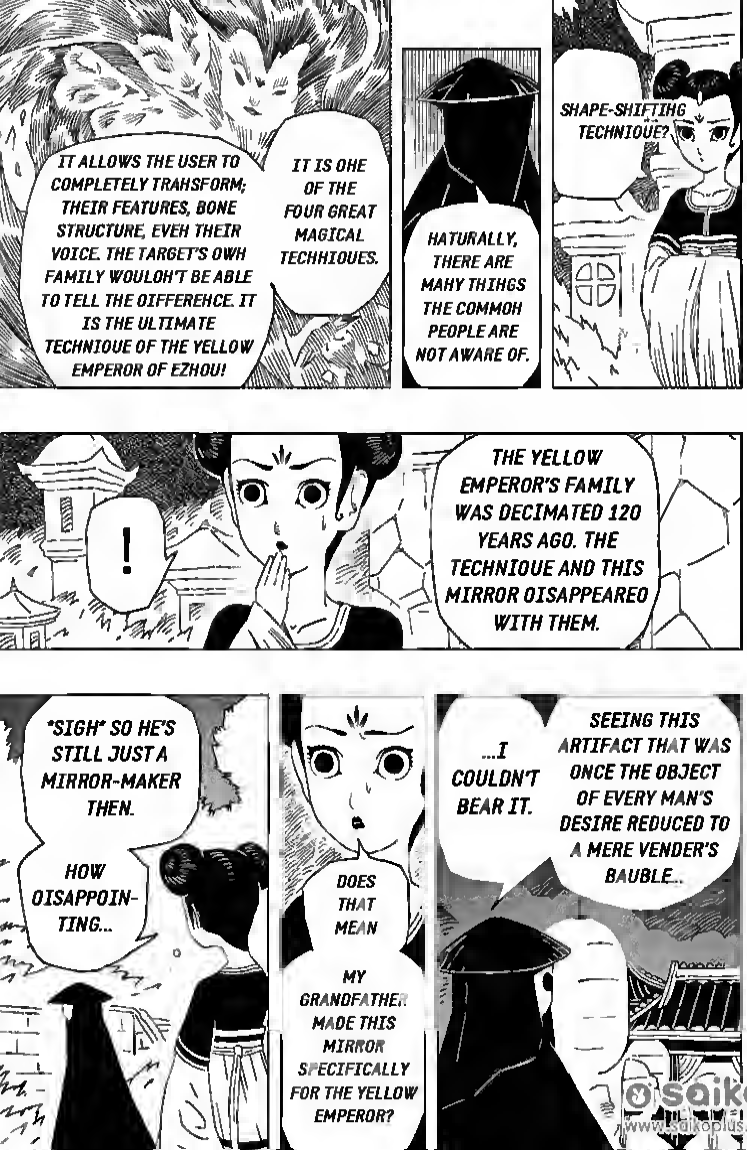
IT ALLOWS THE USER TO COMPLETELY TRAHSFORM; THEIR FEATURES, BONE STRUCTURE, EVEH THEIR VOICE. THE TARGET'S OWH FAMILY WOULOH'T BE ABLE TO TELL THE OIFFEREHCE. IT IS THE ULTIMATE TECHNIOUE OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR OF EZHOU!
IT IS OHE OF THE FOUR GREAT MAGICAL TECHHIOUES.
HATURALLY, THERE ARE MAHY THIHGS THE COMMOH PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE OF.
SHAPE-SHIFTIHG TECHNIOUE?
!
THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S FAMILY WAS DECIMATED 120 YEARS AGO. THE TECHNIOUE AND THIS MIRROR OISAPPEAREO WITH THEM.
"SIGH" SO HE'S STILL JUST A MIRROR-MAKER THEN.
HOW OISAPPOIN-TING...
DOES THAT MEAN
MY GRANDFATHER MADE THIS MIRROR SPECIFICALLY FOR THE YELLOW EMPEROR?
...I COULDN'T BEAR IT.
SEEING THIS ARTIFACT THAT WAS ONCE THE OBJECT OF EVERY MAN'S DESIRE REDUCED TO A MERE VENDER'S BAUBLE...

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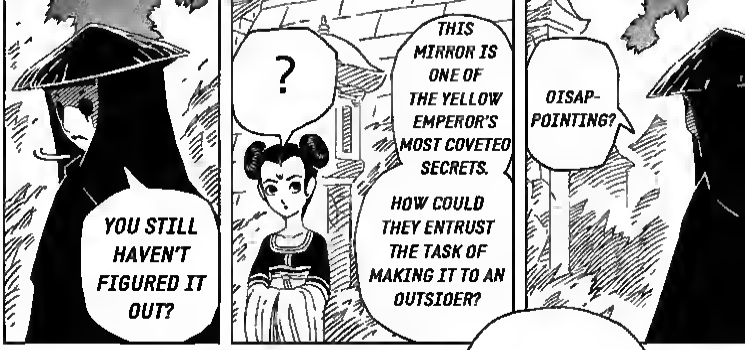
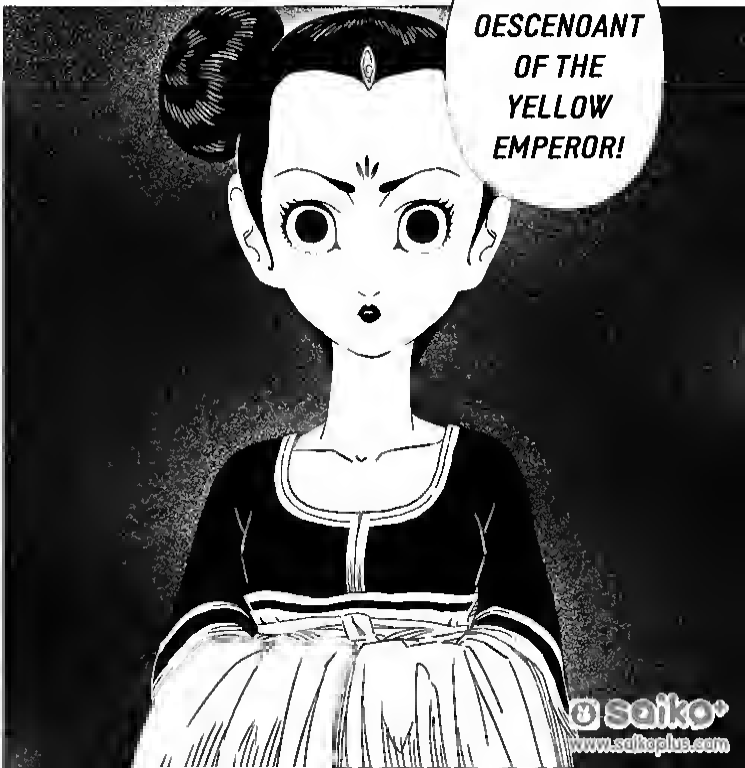

YOU STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT?
?
THIS MIRROR IS ONE OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S MOST COVETED SECRETS.
HOW COULD THEY ENTRUST THE TASK OF MAKING IT TO AN OUTSIDER?
DISAP-POINTING?



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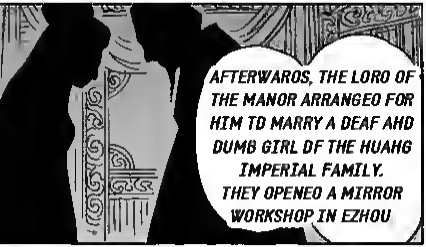
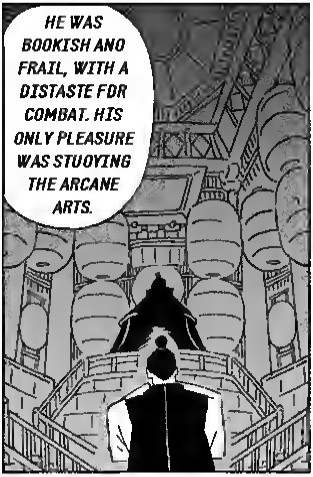
AN ORPHAN AOOPTEO BY THE SIXTH GENERATIOH LORO OF THE HUANG IMPERIAL MANOR.
HUANG YAN, THE SEVENTH SON OF THE SEVENTH GENERATION OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR.


AFTERWAROS, THE LORO OF THE MANOR ARRANGEO FOR HIM TO MARRY A DEAF AHD DUMB GIRL OF THE HUAHG IMPERIAL FAMILY. THEY OPENEO A MIRROR WORKSHOP IN EZHOU



IT SEEMS TO BE THE CASE THAT HE BROUGHT THEM ALL TO HIDE IN CHANG'AN.
AFTER THE DISASTER AT THE MANOR, NOBOOY KNOWS WHAT HAPPENEO TO THE DESCEHDAHTS OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR.

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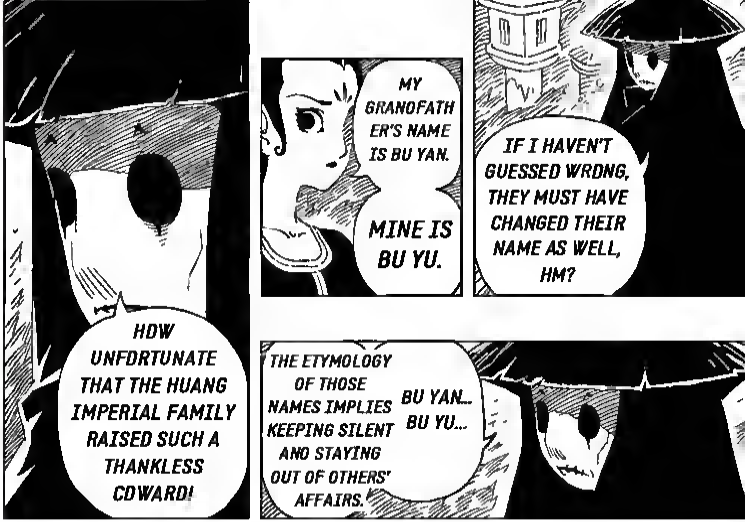
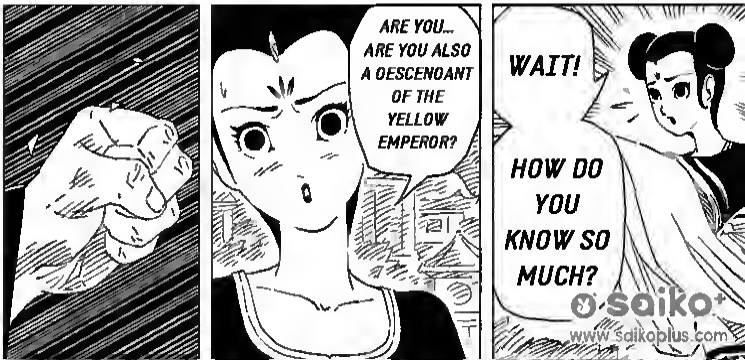

HOW UNFORTUNATE THAT THE HUANG IMPERIAL FAMILY RAISED SUCH A THANKLESS COWARD!
MY GRANDFATHER'S NAME IS BU YAN.
MINE IS BU YU.
IF I HAVEN'T GUESSED WRONG, THEY MUST HAVE CHANGED THEIR NAME AS WELL, HM?
THE ETYMOLOGY OF THOSE NAMES IMPLIES KEEPING SILENT AND STAYING OUT OF OTHERS' AFFAIRS.
BU YAN... BU YU...



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SMASH!
AS THE MANTIS STALKS THE CICADA, BEHIND THEM WILL LURK THE GOLDEN SPARROW.
I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL YAN PO APPEARS.
THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S FAMILY WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE!
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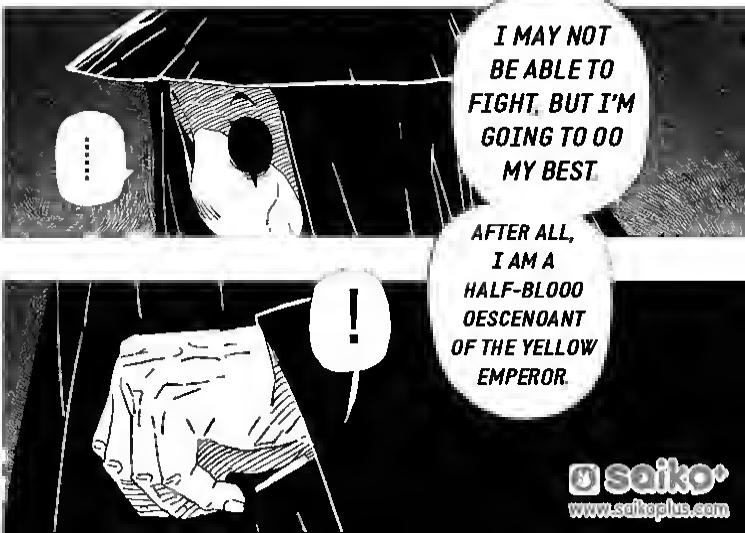
WHY DD I FEEL LIKE SHE KNEW ABOUT THIS IN AOVANCE...?
COULO IT BE...?
CAN IT BE SO? THAT GOLOEN SPARROW IS A OESCENOANT OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR SEEKING REVENGE?
HEY! THAT SAYING...
AREN'T THOSE THE WORDS OF THAT MONSTROUS KILLER?
THE ONE WHO COMMITTEO THOSE ATROCITIES AT THE MANOR WAS YAN PO?


I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FIGHT, BUT I'M GOING TO OO MY BEST.
AFTER ALL, I AM A HALF-BLOOO OESCENOANT OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR.
!
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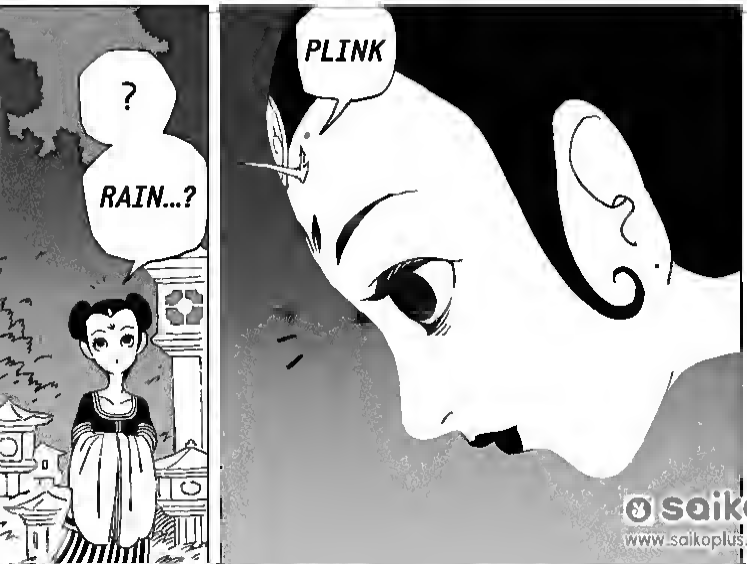

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DRIP
I SUPPOSE I WAS BEING TOO SUSPICIOUS.
SHE DIDN'T CHANGE... SO THAT'S HER REAL FACE.
HUH? WHERE DID THIS MERCURY COME FROM?
YOU RECOGNIZE IT AS MERCURY?
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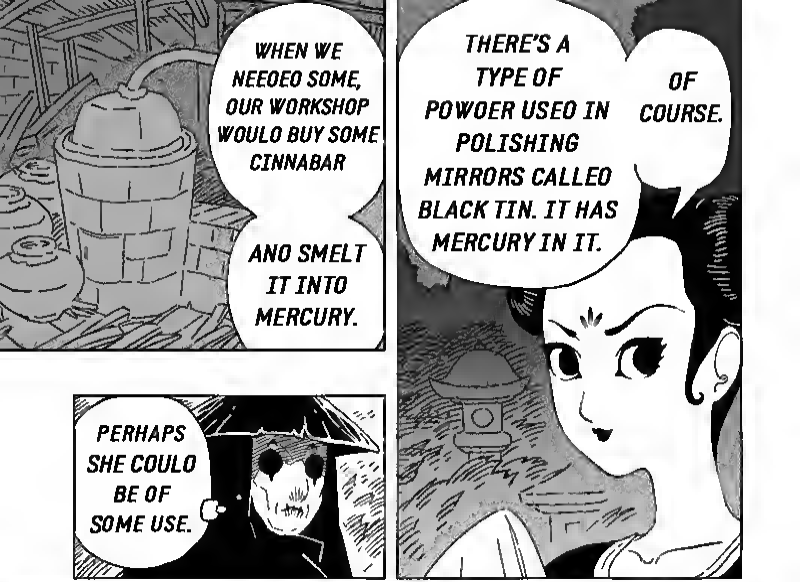
WHEN WE NEEOEO SOME, OUR WORKSHOP WOULO BUY SOME CINNABAR
ANO SMELT IT INTO MERCURY.
THERE'S A TYPE OF POWOER USEO IN POLISHING MIRRORS CALLEO BLACK TIN. IT HAS MERCURY IN IT.
OF COURSE.
PERHAPS SHE COULO BE OF SOME USE.

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO HELP,
PREPARE A LIST OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CINNABAR SELLERS IN CHANG'AN
ANO BRING THEM HERE TOMORROW.

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CALL ME HUANG CHU...
I'M NOT THE GOLDEN SPARROW, AND I'M NO WARRIOR.
I'M JUST ANOTHER DESCENDANT OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR.
CINNABAR MERCHANTS? HM...
I'LL DO MY BEST!
DON'T WORRY, GOLDEN SPARROW.

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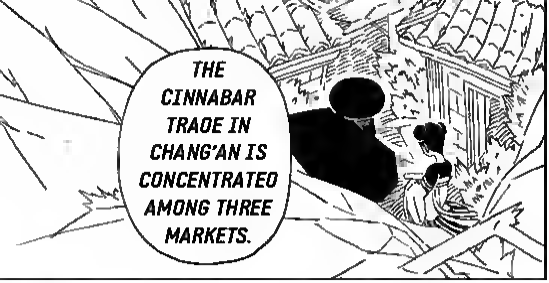

THE NEXT DAY. NIGHTFALL.

THE MEDICINAL MARKET. THERE YOU HAVE THE WANG MERCHANT HOUSE ON THE EAST SIDE OF TOWN AND CLOSE TO THIRTY OTHER MERCHANTS ON THE WEST SIDE.

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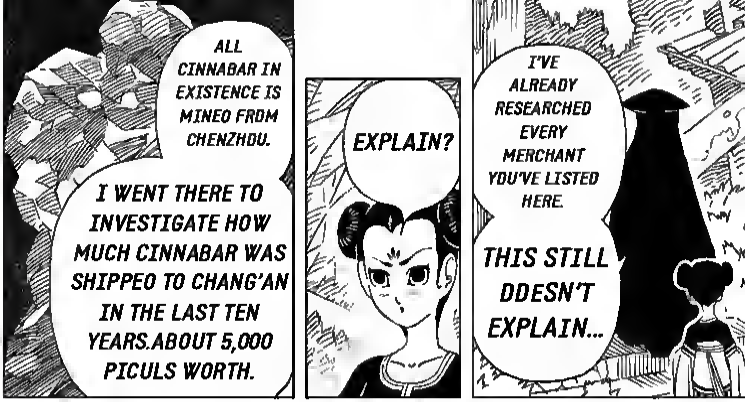
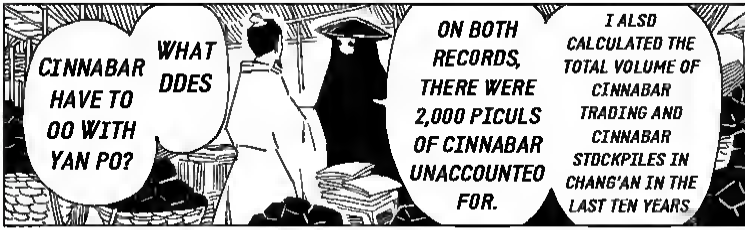
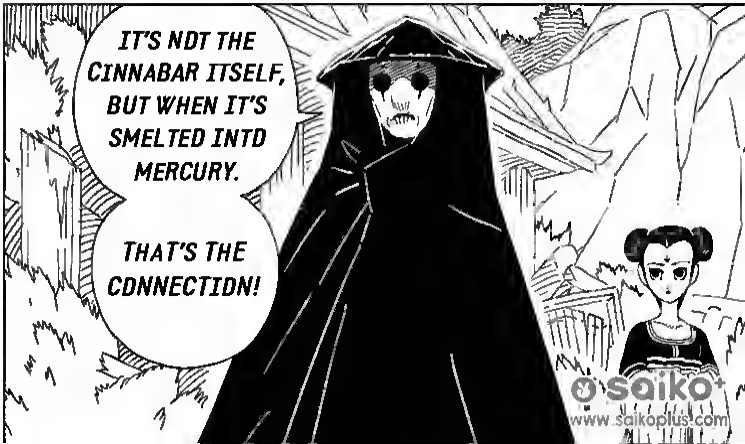

ALL CINNABAR IN EXISTENCE IS MINED FROM CHENZHOU.
I WENT THERE TO INVESTIGATE HOW MUCH CINNABAR WAS SHIPPED TO CHANG'AN IN THE LAST TEN YEARS. ABOUT 5,000 PICULS WORTH.
EXPLAIN?
I'VE ALREADY RESEARCHED EVERY MERCHANT YOU'VE LISTED HERE.
THIS STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN...


WHAT DOES CINNABAR HAVE TO DO WITH YAN PO?
ON BOTH RECORDS, THERE WERE 2,000 PICULS OF CINNABAR UNACCOUNTED FOR.
I ALSO CALCULATED THE TOTAL VOLUME OF CINNABAR TRADING AND CINNABAR STOCKPILES IN CHANG'AN IN THE LAST TEN YEARS



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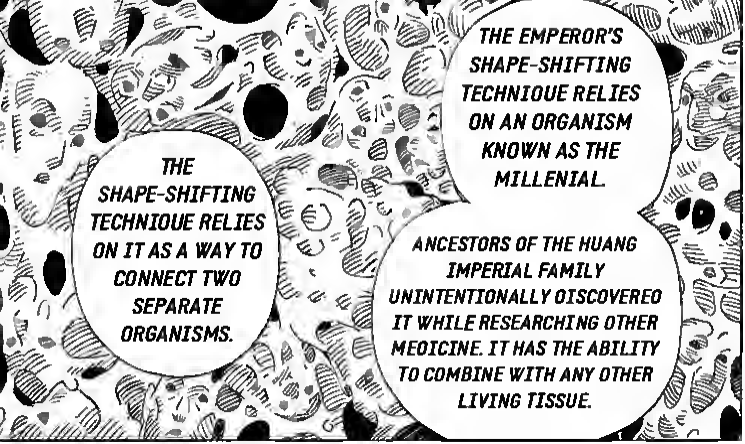
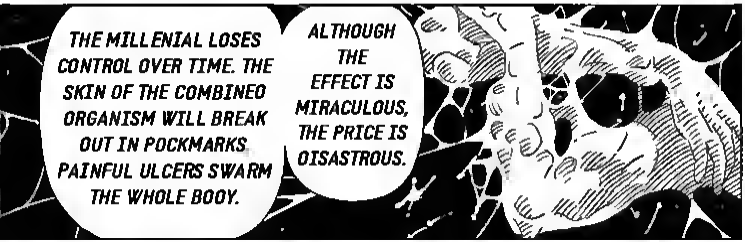
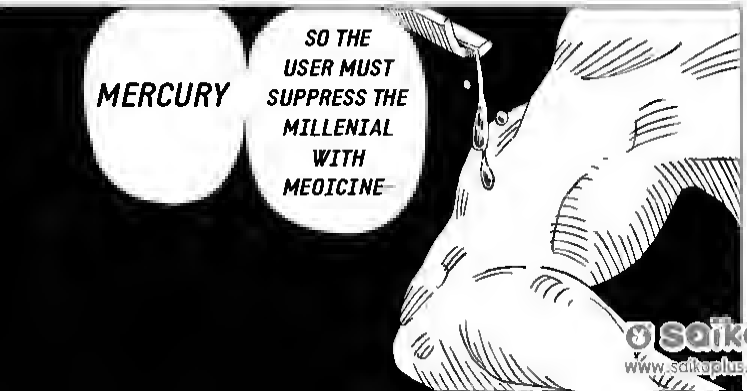

THE EMPEROR'S SHAPE-SHIFTING TECHNIQUE RELIES ON AN ORGANISM KNOWN AS THE MILLENIAL.
THE SHAPE-SHIFTING TECHNIQUE RELIES ON IT AS A WAY TO CONNECT TWO SEPARATE ORGANISMS.
ANCESTORS OF THE HUANG IMPERIAL FAMILY UNINTENTIONALLY DISCOVERED IT WHILE RESEARCHING OTHER MEDICINE. IT HAS THE ABILITY TO COMBINE WITH ANY OTHER LIVING TISSUE.


THE MILLENIAL LOSES CONTROL OVER TIME. THE SKIN OF THE COMBINED ORGANISM WILL BREAK OUT IN POCKMARKS. PAINFUL ULCERS SWARM THE WHOLE BODY.
ALTHOUGH THE EFFECT IS MIRACULOUS, THE PRICE IS DISASTROUS.



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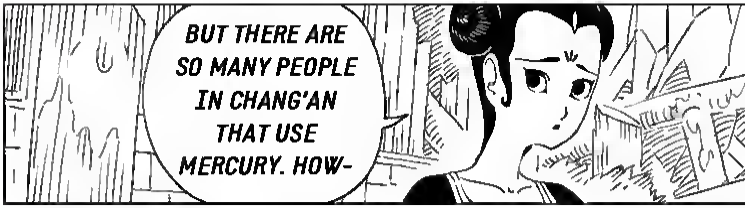
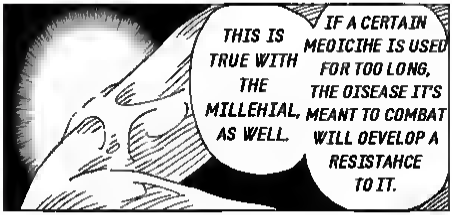
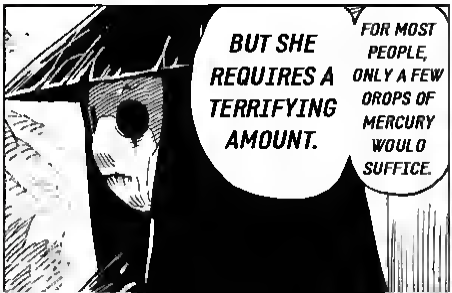
IF WE CAN FIND THE MERCURY, WE CAN FIND HER.
IF YAN PO STOLE THE SECRETS OF THE SHAPE-SHIFTIHG TECHNIQUE, SHE'LL NEED A SUPPLY OF MERCURY FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE.




THIS IS TRUE WITH THE MILLEHIAL, AS WELL.
IF A CERTAIN MEDICIHE IS USED FOR TOO LONG, THE DISEASE IT'S MEANT TO COMBAT WILL DEVELOP A RESISTAHCE TO IT.



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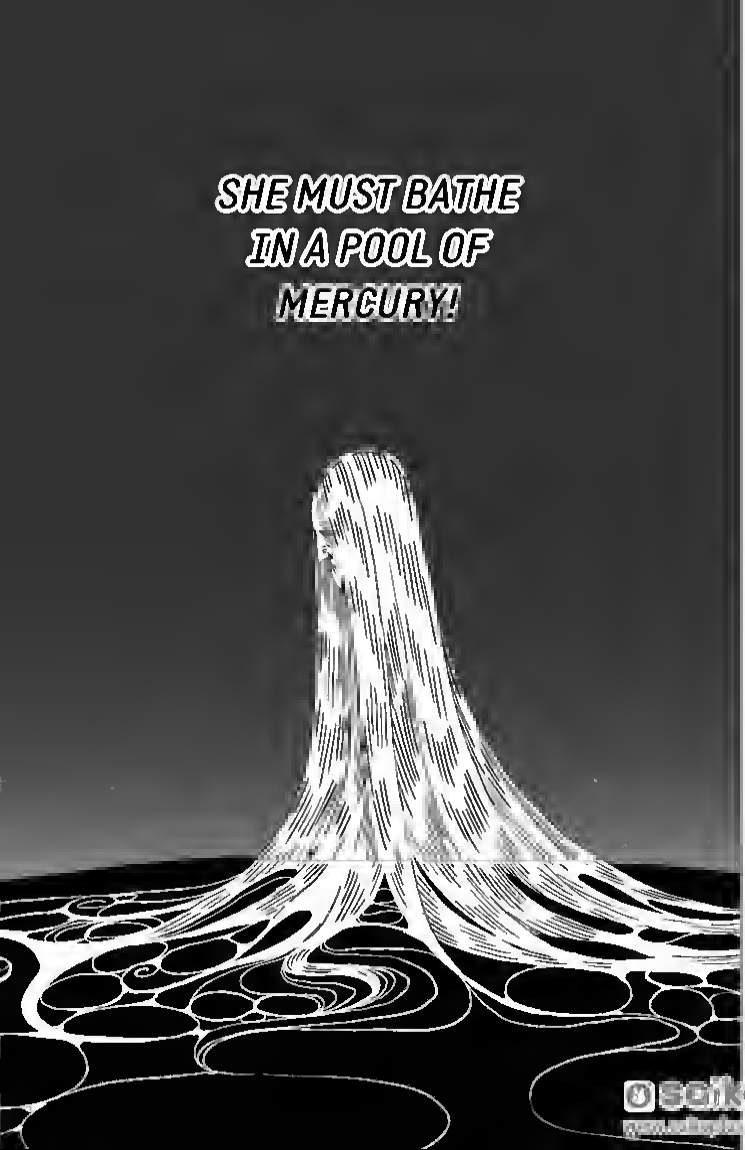
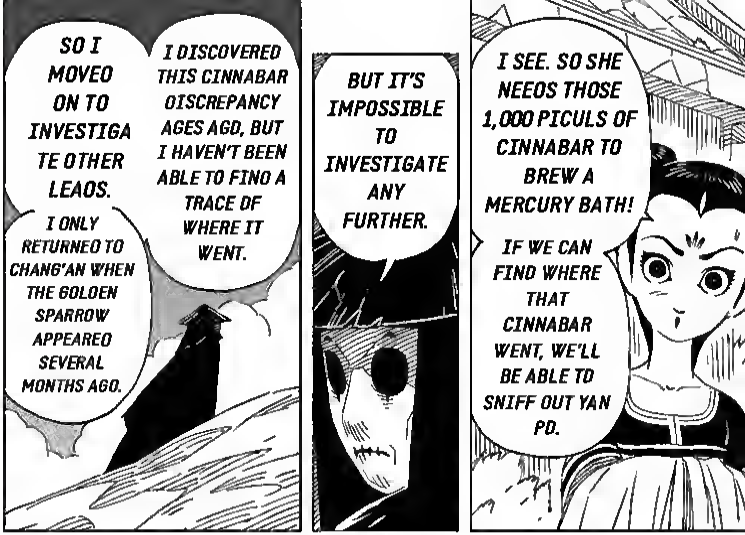
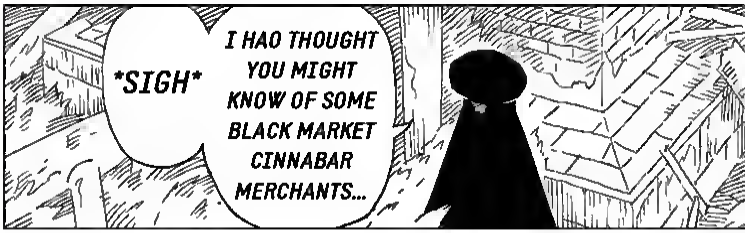

SHE MUST BATHE
IN A POOL OF
MERCURY!


SO I MOVED ON TO INVESTIGATE OTHER LEADS.
I ONLY RETURNED TO CHANG'AN WHEN THE GOLDEN SPARROW APPEARED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.
I DISCOVERED THIS CINNABAR DISCREPANCY AGES AGO, BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND A TRACE OF WHERE IT WENT.
BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO INVESTIGATE ANY FURTHER.
I SEE. SO SHE NEEDS THOSE 1,000 PICULS OF CINNABAR TO BREW A MERCURY BATH!
IF WE CAN FIND WHERE THAT CINNABAR WENT, WE'LL BE ABLE TO SNIFF OUT YAN PO.



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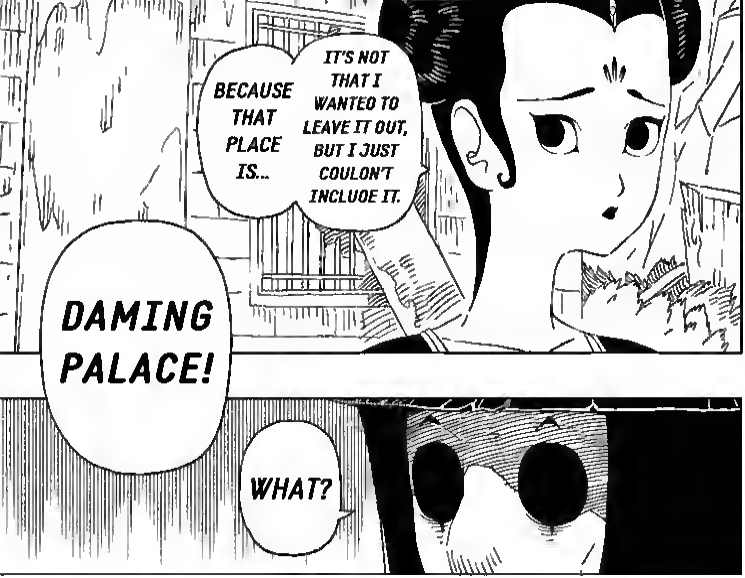
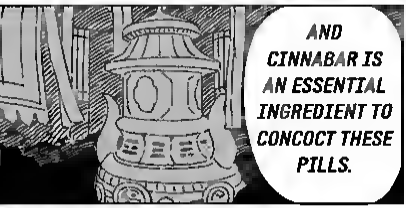
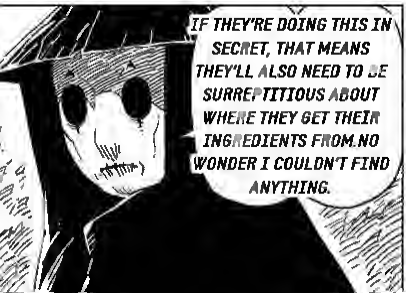
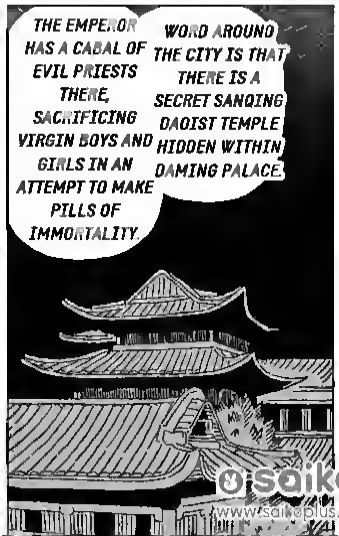





IF THEY'RE DOING THIS IN SECRET, THAT MEANS THEY'LL ALSO NEED TO BE SURREPTITIOUS ABOUT WHERE THEY GET THEIR INGREDIENTS FROM. NO WONDER I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING.


THE EMPEROR HAS A CABAL OF EVIL PRIESTS THERE, SACRIFICING VIRGIN BOYS AND GIRLS IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE PILLS OF IMMORTALITY.
WORD AROUND THE CITY IS THAT THERE IS A SECRET SANQING DAOIST TEMPLE HIDDEN WITHIN DAMING PALACE.

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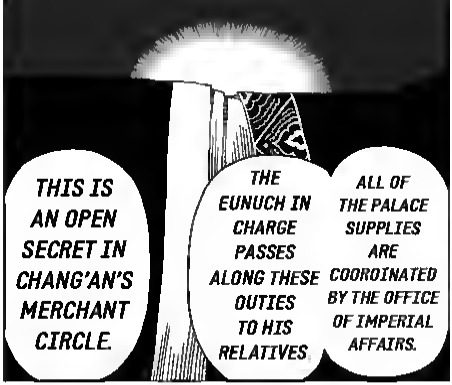
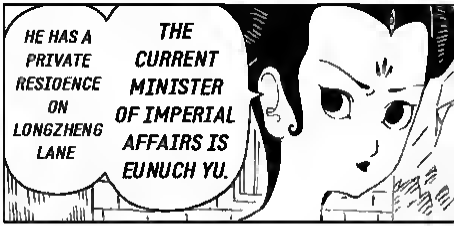

THIS IS AN OPEN SECRET IN CHANG'AN'S MERCHANT CIRCLE.
THE EUNUCH IN CHARGE PASSES ALONG THESE DUTIES TO HIS RELATIVES.
ALL OF THE PALACE SUPPLIES ARE COORDINATED BY THE OFFICE OF IMPERIAL AFFAIRS.



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LONGZHENG LANE. EUNUCH YU'S PRIVATE RESIDENCE.
EUNUCH YU'S WIFE, YU SHISNI.
I'VE BEEN FEELING SO HOT TODAY SO I HAD A FEW MORE CUPS, AND THEN MY STOMACH STARTED ACTING UP.
YOU CAME AT THE RIGHT TIME.
LIGHT SOME SOOTHING INCENSE AND DRINK ONE BOWL. YOU'LL BE FINE.
NO MATTER.
THE IMPERIAL PHYSICIAN HAS ARRIVED.

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I SMELL SULFUR!
A SECRET PASSAGE!
OR A TRAP?
ONLY SULFUR CAN NEUTRALIZE THIS TOXICITY!
MERCURY IS SLIGHTLY TOXIC, BUT IT CAN BE DEADLY IN LARGE AMOUNTS.
I'M WILLING TO BET. ONWARO!
COULD IT BE... THE MERCURY POOL IS BELOW US?
SO THE MERCURY IS USED TO TREAT THE SHAPE-SHIFTING SIDE EFFECTS.
AND THE SULFUR'S USED TO OFFSET THE TOXICITY OF THE MERCURY.
I SEE.

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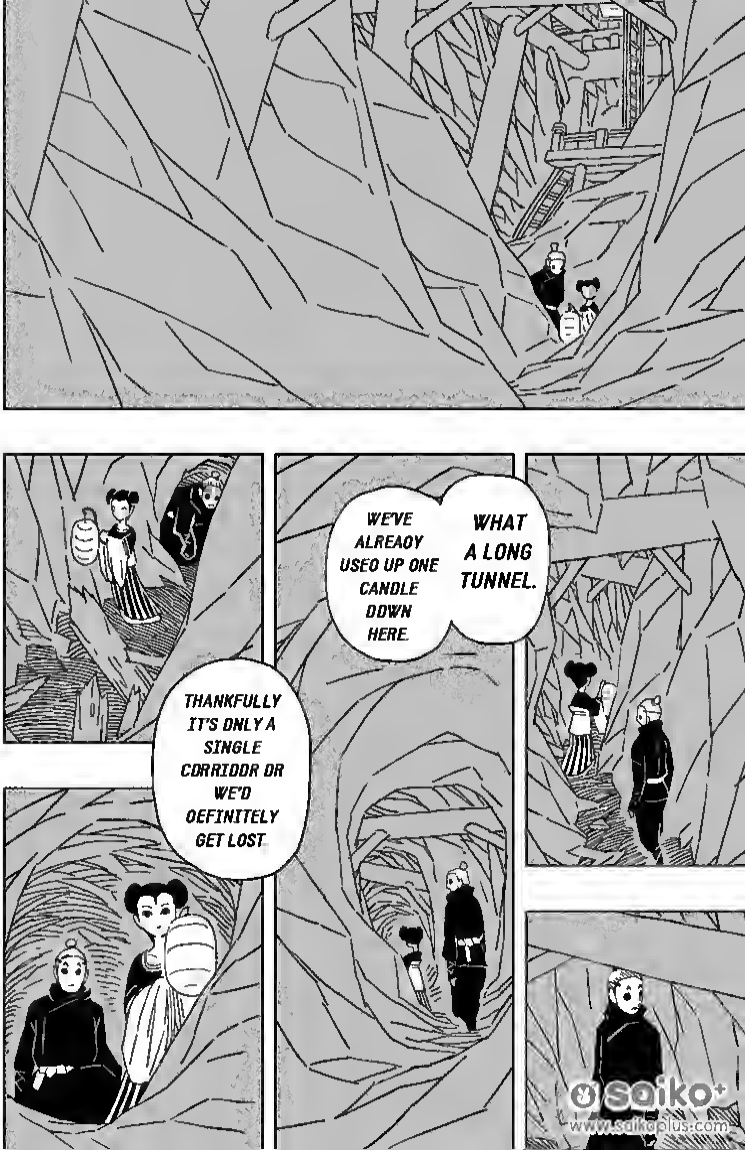
WHAT A LONG TUNNEL.
WE'VE ALREAOY USEO UP ONE CANDLE DOWN HERE.
THANKFULLY IT'S ONLY A SINGLE CORRIDOR OR WE'D OEFINITELY GET LOST.
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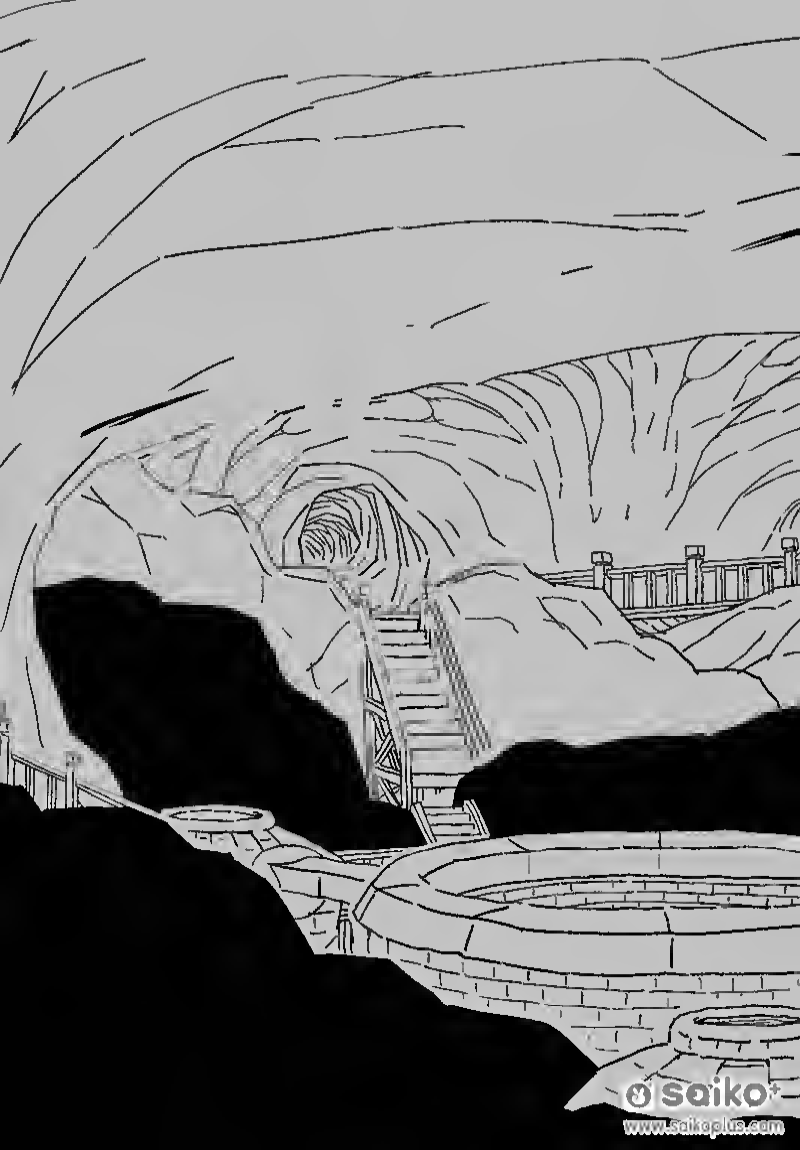
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